

Congresswoman Grace F. Napolitano

Report to the 38th District

Spring 2005

Community Concerned About Social Security

Nearly 100 constituents attended two Town Hall meetings in late March to learn more about privatization proposals for Social Security.

Representatives from the Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, AARP, Rock The Vote and the Social Security Administration (SSA) were on hand to address the various reform proposals and answer questions from the audience. The congresswoman hosted the events at the East Los Angeles Library and Hacienda Heights Women's Club.

SSA Regional Communications Director Leslie Walker stated Social Security will continue to pay out 100 percent of benefits until 2041, after which time it will be able to

pay 73 percent of expected benefits to retirees.

"The question now is: How do we change some things in order to pay 100 percent?" she asked.

Guest speakers shared concerns on what effect proposals creating private investment accounts would have on future generations.

Experts explained that workers' guaranteed benefits would be cut to create a program that would turn their safety net into a risky gamble on the stock market.



Napolitano discusses Social Security at East Los Angeles forum.

Questions from the audience focused on how these proposed reform ideas would affect the solvency of the current system. Experts noted that the creation of private accounts would not solve the problem and would, in effect, speed up the date when the SSA would be unable to pay out full benefits.

Upcoming Events

Military Academy Fair

(May 18, El Rancho HS - Pico Rivera)

Representatives from service academies will be on hand to talk about the 2006 application process.

Congressional Art Contest

(May 21, School of Arts & Enterprise - Pomona)

Entries from high school students will be judged. Winner will come to U.S. Capitol, where work will be displayed.

Federal Grants Town Hall

Date and venue to be finalized

For more information on these events, please contact the district office at (562) 801-2134

New Roles, Priorities for 4th Term

Congresswoman Grace Napolitano was sworn in for her fourth term in office on Jan. 4, the same day she was officially installed as the new chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus for a two-year term.

In her new role, the congresswoman will continue to promote the agenda of her district because its priorities match those of the CHC: access to healthcare, quality education for all, job creation and assistance to small businesses. The CHC is comprised of 21 Hispanic members of the House of Representatives.

"I am humbled that my colleagues have honored me with advancing our goals," she said. "We have a lot of work ahead. With this opportunity comes a way for me to shine the spotlight on the concerns and problems of all my

constituents."

The congresswoman has also retained her position as Ranking Member on the Water & Power Subcommittee of the House Resources Committee, making her the top House Democrat with oversight over water projects. In addition, she will serve on the International Relations Committee, where she sits on the Western Hemisphere and Europe and Emerging Threats Subcommittees.

INSIDE

More than \$10 million secured for district transportation, health and other needs

Pages 4-5

Prioritizing rail safety after several dangerous derailments

Page 4

East LA Literacy Program Helps Parents Teach Kids



Napolitano recognizes program organizers Herrera, Morales and Camacho (left to right)

Congresswoman Napolitano recently helped kick off the *Feria de los Libros* at a third East Los Angeles grammar school, aiming to increase parental involvement in the education of their children.

“My mother once told me that in life you can lose your belongings, friends and material possessions. But one thing you will never lose is your education,” she told about 200 children and parents gathered at Eastman Elementary School for the opening literacy festival.

Louis Herrera and Gustavo

Camacho of the Greater East Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce brokered the unique partnership with Dr. Rosario Morales of California State University-Los Angeles that brought together area businesses, law enforcement, government and higher education. Now in its third year, the program is conducted at a different elementary school each year. Organizers are looking to expand the program and its outreach efforts.

At least 40 families spend seven Saturdays at the school, working with undergraduate and graduate students in the university’s Education Department in creating and writing a book on a topic of their choice and learning how to read to their children. Those sessions are followed by four field trips, including a visit to Cal State and the newly expanded public library in East Los Angeles.

Napolitano praised the program, saying it will help parents learn how to help their children. Telling parents she didn’t have many of the opportunities presently available to youngsters, Napolitano noted she joined Congress with only a high school education.

“You can imagine what your children can become with a university education,” she added.

Montebello Teen Serves as House Page

Montebello High School student Wilfredo Velasco spent the first semester of his junior year in Washington, one of a select group of 67 Congressional Pages.

Velasco, who turned 17 in March, spent his mornings in class and his afternoons and evenings exploring the halls of Congress.

“It’s really an eye-opener. You learn a lot,” he said in between his daily duties, which generally consisted of running correspondence between congressional offices, answering phones and delivering flags requested by constituents.

Velasco hadn’t considered applying for the program until he was approached by his principal because of his stellar academic record. After interviewing with Congresswoman Napolitano’s staff, he learned during the summer that he had been accepted.

Two weeks before the start of the academic year, he quit his part-time job and prepared for a semester away from home. As promised, he called his mother every other night to calm her concern about her son being so far from home.

His experience afforded him an opportunity to make new friends from around the country who all brought

different viewpoints with them to Washington. He encountered a number of noteworthy legislators and was thrilled to speak with Congresswoman Napolitano when she spotted him on the House floor.

Although he is unsure if his future includes work in government, Wilfredo gained key insight into the impact and importance of the process while learning how the political process works.

For more information

On the Congressional Page program, visit <http://www.napolitano.house.gov/> or call (562) 801-2134

District Staff - Santa Fe Springs

Amelia Wang, Director

Ben Cardenas, Assistant Director
Perla Hernandez, Senior Field Rep.
Gerri Guzman, Field Rep.

Bernie Bakke, Caseworker

Jesse Saucedo, Field Rep./Caseworker
Christine Cortez, Caseworker
Stacy Brennan, Staff Assistant



Standing (from left to right): Guzman, Saucedo, Bakke, Brennan, Cortez, Hernandez.
Seated (from left to right): Cardenas, Wang.



Metropolitan Water District Chief Executive Officer Phil Pace presents Napolitano with an award for her work on water safety.

Napolitano's Water Bill Becomes Law

Congress passed two major bills in the closing months of 2004, critical components in the effort to ensure the supply stability, reliability and safety of the area's drinking water.

By authorizing the \$395 million in federal funding for the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, Congress approved a plan to improve water quality in the district.

Of particular importance to Congresswoman Napolitano was money to fund water recycling and storage programs, which will be critical as Southern California cities face the dual problems of an increasing population and an Interior Department ruling that reduces the amount of water the state can take from the Colorado River by 2016. Southern California receives one-third of its water supply from the river.

For her work on the legislation, the Metropolitan Water District Board of Trustees honored Congresswoman Napolitano and fellow California Congressman Ken Calvert, who chaired the Water & Power Subcommittee.

President Bush also signed into law the Congresswoman's bill to add \$6.5 million for Congress to help fund the San Gabriel Basin Demonstration Project.

Her bill increases the \$38 million limit Congress placed on the Bureau of Reclamations in funding the cleanup of cancer-causing contaminants in the aquifer underneath the San Gabriel Valley Basin. It also adds City of Industry, El Monte and South El Monte to the list of cities eligible for cleanup effort money.

"This goes beyond just cleaning contaminated water," she said. "This project will be an economic boon for the area by ensuring not only that the water is clean, but that the region will have a viable source of water for years to come by cleaning and utilizing an existing resource."

"This critical step will help not just businesses already in the region but will draw new business activity to the City of Industry and other surrounding communities."

Prison Alternative For Mothers Turns 5

The Family Foundations Program celebrated its fifth anniversary in October, and Congresswoman Napolitano was on hand to present a Certificate of Congressional Recognition to its organizers.

The program provides alternative sentencing options for pregnant women or those whose children are younger than 6 years old who have been sentenced to terms in state prison for non-violent drug offenses.

Its Santa Fe Springs facility houses up to 35 women and 40 children. The program provides the mothers with substance abuse treatment while

allowing them to see and raise their children. Eighty-five percent of participants successfully completed parole.

"What is more important than helping these women to raise their children?" asked Napolitano, who was presented with the group's first Grace F. Napolitano Outstanding Leadership Award.

The Family Foundations Program is a court-ordered program run by the California State Department of Corrections. It is operated by the Los Angeles Centers for Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

Capitol Staff - Washington, D.C.

Kate Krause, Chief of Staff
Daniel Chao, Legislative Director
Joel Eskovitz, Press Secretary
Jennifer Silva, Scheduler

Joe Sheehy, Legislative Assistant
Kenneth Reyes, Leg. Asst/Finances
Jesper Pedersen, Leg. Asst/Systems



Standing (from left to right): Sheehy, Chao, Reyes, Pedersen, Eskovitz.
Seated (from left to right): Silva, Krause.

Train Derailments Spark Safety Inquiry

Congresswoman Napolitano has been working closely with County Supervisor Gloria Molina, Sen. Diane Feinstein, Congresswoman Linda Sanchez and state and federal agencies to address rail safety standards after several Union Pacific train derailments in and adjacent to her district during the past six months.

In October, a joint bar failure caused a UP train to derail, sending cars into a residential neighborhood in the Whittier area.

In March, a broken rail caused 21 cars from a UP train to derail in Industry, spilling combustible liquid and forcing the evacuation of more than 100 local businesses. A day later, a vandal purportedly threw an unlocked switch, causing three UP cars to ram into utility poles in Santa Fe Springs.

Several other derailments pose serious questions over the safety along the 45-mile Alameda Corridor East. She has joined the other lawmakers in all meetings with Union Pacific regarding South Whittier to ensure area residents received adequate and responsive assistance.

The Congresswoman and her colleagues have worked with the California Public Utilities Commission and the Federal Railway Administration for recommendations addressing public safety standards in Congress to ensure rail integrity.

She looks forward to working with her colleagues to develop legislation to hold the autonomous railroad companies accountable for improved maintenance, equipment and new technology that would assure the safety of her district residents and adjoining areas.



Emergency officials inspect the damage caused when a Union Pacific train derailed in the City of Industry in March.

Napolitano Secures 2005 Federal Funds

The annual spending bills for the fiscal year that ends Sept. 30 yielded the following for the 38th District and its municipalities (Los Angeles County funds unincorporated areas such as Los Nietos, Hacienda Heights, Bassett, Avocado Heights and East Los Angeles):

- **\$4.5 million to the San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority** to continue its groundwater contamination cleanup program.
- **\$1 million for Municipal Transit Operators Coalition (MTOC)** Bus Lines serving the cities of Montebello, Norwalk, Commerce, Culver City, Gardena, Santa Monica and Torrance. Allows for replacement of old diesel-fueled buses with handicapped-accessible and cleaner fuel buses; expand service to serve those who need the service to get to work; and build additional compressed natural gas fueling and bus facilities.
- **\$2 million for Alameda Corridor East (ACE) Phase II Plan** to help plan a comprehensive corridor improvement program that will address both existing and anticipated safety and mobility issues at a total of 55 overpasses and underpasses along a 35-mile corridor through San Gabriel Valley from East Los Angeles to Pomona.
- **\$500,000 to San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments for Metro Gold Line Phase II Extension** that would serve Pomona by connecting downtown Los Angeles and Claremont through the LA Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Metro Rail System.
- **\$200,000 for Foothill Transit's "Transit Oriented Neighborhood Program"** to help construct commuter park-and-ride facilities throughout the San Gabriel Valley and Pomona.
- **\$72,500 for South Montebello Irrigation District** to construct a community center included in the new emergency response building.

Honoring New Nurse Assistants

Congresswoman Napolitano joined bilingual Hispanic nurse instructor Margie Arviso in distributing certificates and single roses to the 19 students who completed their Certified Nurses Training Program at the East Los Angeles Training Center.

The Congresswoman congratulated the participants, lauding their hard work and telling them they would not have trouble finding employment with their new skills.

"This program not only will begin to address the tremendous nursing shortage, but the skills and training you receive from this caring and capable staff will enable you to find good paying jobs so that your families will grow and prosper," she said.



Napolitano congratulates graduates of the Certified Nurses Training Program.

The Congresswoman credited the success of the program to the work of the staff of the training center and Arviso, a graduate of the East Los Angeles College nursing program who most recently served as nurse manager for the Los Angeles County Women's and Children's Hospital.

Business Secures Loan to Stay in Santa Fe Springs

Congresswoman Napolitano recently toured West Coast Plastics, a Santa Fe Springs-based company she assisted in securing a Small Business Administration loan. Alberto Alvarado, director of the Los Angeles District Office of the SBA, also joined the tour.

Napolitano connected the SBA with West Coast Plastics, securing a \$1.4 million loan to create more jobs in the area and expand operations by buying off a silent partner who wanted to move the business to Mexico.

Community-minded owners Bob Ibanez and Javier Franco — who run the company with other members of their family — reached out to the Congresswoman after recognizing buying off their partner was the only way to ensure the company did not move out of the country and take more than 100 local jobs with it.

"Without her help, I really doubt this would have happened the way that it did," said Ibanez's daughter, Samie Benning.

Since opening in 2000, the Hispanic-owned West Coast Plastics has grown from a small operation with roughly a dozen employees to one that currently employs 105 mostly area residents.

The company manufactures plastic bottles for orange juice, milk and nonperishable items such as oil and bleach. Demand for its products continues to grow, and the company also plans to use its loan money to fund an expansion of its operation.

For more information

On the Small Business Administration, contact its Web site at <http://www.sba.gov>.

Pomona

- **\$1.25 million to help construct a four-lane overpass** for Mission Boulevard over the existing four-lane Route 71 Expressway and help build entrance and exit ramps between the two corridors.
- **\$250,000 for local police communications systems upgrade** to make essential technology improvements that will eliminate communication lapses and "dead zones" that currently hamper police operations and timely response to emergencies.
- **\$140,000 for La Casita After School Program** to provide high-risk teenagers with positive and intensive educational programs, along with recreational activities aimed at reducing gang violence, vandalism and related problems.

Montebello

- **\$250,000 to replace and upgrade the Police Department's dispatch and records system** that will sync radio systems with those in nearby jurisdictions, including Pomona.

Norwalk

- **\$410,000 for planning and construction to upgrade the city's water facilities** and provide a more reliable water supply.
- **\$150,000 for Teen Alliance Program** to increase expansion and outreach to serve more teens, providing an alternative to gang involvement and other delinquent activities.

Pico Rivera, La Puente & Santa Fe Springs

- **\$500,000 for Pacific Clinics Adolescent Suicide Prevention Program** to provide school-based mental health services to Los Alisos Middle School (Norwalk), North Park Middle School (Pico Rivera), Lake Center Middle School (Santa Fe Springs), and Bassett High School (La Puente). Primarily focused on suicide prevention for Latina adolescents, the program also works with any teen needing help to deal with depression, low self esteem, anorexia, substance abuse and other related conditions.

Mental Health Impacts Municipalities, Schools

Congresswoman Grace Napolitano continues to speak to fight the stigma associated with mental illness that prevents people from recognizing and treating mental health problems.

The Congresswoman gave the keynote address at the Health Care Forum for National Hispanic Legislators last year, and in February she spoke to the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund.

Napolitano, the co-chair of the Congressional Mental Health Caucus, specifically targeted her concerns regarding the old and young members of our communities and how their mental health needs affect the society at large, socially and economically.

Focusing on youth, Napolitano highlighted a program that the nonprofit Pacific Clinics runs in her district that brings counselors into schools to help students deal with a wide range of behavioral mental problems that hinder their ability to reach their full potential. Still, she notes, the focus placed on the issue is not as wide as it should be.

“Why does it take a tragedy of a school shooting to get our attention?” she asked attendees at the August forum.

Discussing seniors, she noted that they suffer from high rates of depression that often go undetected because doctors focus on other health problems and often times are not

trained to recognize mental health symptoms associated with the elderly.

The impact is particularly staggering on veterans, she said, pointing out Department of Veterans Affairs statistics that show of the nearly 300,000 homeless veterans, 45 percent have a mental illness and half have a substance abuse problem.

There again, she noted, families and municipalities are affected. She warned that the problem could worsen if returning servicemen do not get comprehensive care that includes treatment for post traumatic stress disorder. Napolitano said Congress needs to recognize critical needs and recognize and fund the VA programs essential to provide those services.



Congresswoman Grace F. Napolitano

District Office:

11627 E. Telegraph Road, #100
Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670
ph: 562-801-2134
fax: 562-949-9144

Capitol Office:

1609 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515
ph: 202-225-5256
fax: 202-225-0027

<http://www.napolitano.house.gov/>

N

M.C.
PRSRT STD

